

The Social Economy in Quebec.

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I wish to thank BALTA for this invitation to participate in this Forum. I am honored and delighted to have this opportunity to share some reflections with you on the social economy in Quebec and on the CURA experience as it continues to evolve. While I will make some reference to the portrait of the social economy in Quebec today – its many achievements and results in terms of job creation and the promotion of collective enterprise – I would like to focus on the evolution of the social economy in Quebec as a *process*, to share with you the many elements that have allowed the social economy to assume the place it occupies in Quebec society today and the challenges it faces. This “*process*” has been and will continue to be vital to the *progress* of the social economy in Quebec and provides important lessons for other regions. The Quebec experience demonstrates the importance and the variability of institutional contexts in which the social economy emerges; in Quebec, alliances between social movements, labour, the cooperative movement and the community sector and, most significantly, the construction of an institutional context for multi-stakeholder partnerships committed to a framework of “*distributed governance*” have been critical to the development of the social economy. Social economy actors are engaged in *institutional innovation* at several levels, not the least of which is the creation of a network of networks, the “Chantier de l’économie sociale” and the development of enabling instruments – finance, training, business services and research. They are *re-embedding the economy in social contexts*, designing sustainable approaches to development that meet the needs and desires of communities and developing the appropriate tools to achieve this. This represents the architecture of the social economy in Quebec today.

But permit me back up a bit. Why is there such an interest in civil society, in associations, in community across the political spectrum, from the call for renewed civic engagement, to proposals to democratize the welfare state by having community, associations, collective enterprise play an integral role in constructing a transformed or post-welfare state? There is a great deal of literature on and interest in “empowerment”. However, empowerment, in any sense that really matters, must result in a substantive transfer of resources. If the social economy as it exists in Quebec and elsewhere is empowering, it requires *new public spaces* in which new and hybrid socio-economic arrangements can be negotiated. In fact, it requires “*multiple public spaces*” – many decision making centers, multi-spatial sub-systems of regulation; it requires institutional innovation. It is in these spaces that social economy actors can influence the allocation of resources through *negotiated strategies of socio-economic development*. The challenge is to coordinate these multiple publics into structured and hybrid meso and macro institutional settings. Simply stated, this implies coordinated decentralization and linkages with different levels of government or what American writers have referred to as “comprehensive community development strategies” in their work on place-based strategies. Others refer to this as “*co-regulation*” as policy makers and citizens construct enabling policy environments. In

essence, this implies a movement away from a localized, spatialized or sectoral focus towards a *political economy of citizenship* that addresses the productive roles of democratic citizens in creating private and public wealth, leveraging the capacity of citizens to construct collaborative alternative development strategies with private and public sector actors. This process incorporates innovations in community based social service provision, job creation, the development of new sectors of activity, generic tools of development such as finance, training, research, an information commons, and so on. In the US, there is common reference to the civic renewal movement and comprehensive community strategies; in Canada we are currently adapting these comprehensive community strategies in pilot projects across the country.

The social economy in Quebec is an example of institutional experimentation that has replaced hierarchical forms of governance with *deliberative processes*, in which the private, public and popular community based sector participate in negotiating socio-economic development strategies. These processes confirm, in the words of Karl Polanyi, “*the role of deliberate change in institutions*” and the “*freedom to change institutions*”, of *voice* in policy design. The social economy in Quebec has its roots in popular culture, in oppositional movements. Today, it negotiates new social arrangements within a plurality of institutions that intersect and overlap. This is the result of what Gilles Paquet refers to as a process of “co-evolution”, a combination of learning, resilience and cultural adaptation, as those more accustomed to confrontational or adversarial relationships, establish collaborative partnerships to reach shared objectives. Experience has shown that the incorporation of groups, movements, associations into institutional spaces in which they co-habit and work in partnership, facilitates the transformation towards more democratic forms of governance. Institutionalization of these practices and processes further facilitates their integration into the public agenda. Government turns to non-institutional actors and participates in institutional innovation by initiating processes of co-regulation, especially when citizen –based socio-economic initiatives succeed where strategies adopted by government have failed. This is more so in Quebec due to the strong presence of social movements and to the networking of actors, enabling them to negotiate with government with a single voice.

The social economy in Quebec has a long history; its current prominence, however, began in 1996, when the Bouchard government invited community groups and social movements to participate in a Summit on the Economic and Social Future of Quebec. The “Chantier de l’économie sociale” was one of two “chantiers”, “building sites” or “task forces”, assigned to propose strategies to address the fiscal and unemployment crisis faced by the Bouchard government at the time. Economic Summits were not new to Quebec. “Concertation”, a term commonly used to refer to tripartite negotiations and conversations between major players in Quebec – business, government and the labour movement –is embedded in the political culture of Quebec. The state – the government of Quebec- has been engaged in economic development strategies from the Quiet Revolution in the 1960’s. Almost 40% of Quebec workers are unionized, placing labour in an important negotiating position, especially, but not only in the public sector. The private sector is the powerful third partner in this social arrangement to develop and steer the economy that has characterized Quebec and has distinguished it from the rest of the

country. Today, its embeddedness in Quebec culture is confirmed by the difficulties that the current Charest government has encountered in its drive to dismantle the so-called “Quebec model” and modernize the Quebec state. The resistance comes from all social actors.

What was referred to as a “developmental state” in the literature, very much characterizes Quebec from the 1960’s and 1970’s and the creation of numerous large state-owned enterprises. The nature of Quebec society and the commitment to build the Quebec economy was and is reflected in its openness to dialogue with major actors. The “partnership state” best characterizes what is often referred to as “Quebec Inc”, to describe the relationship between the Quebec government, labour and business from the 1980’s as it established priorities for the Quebec economy and developed innovative strategies to achieve these. This was particularly the case in 1983 and the creation of the *Fonds de solidarité des travailleurs* by the Quebec Federation of Labour, an important moment in the contemporary history of Quebec and for our understanding of the social economy as it evolves.

The *Fonds de solidarité* is, first and foremost, a pension fund made up of voluntary contributions by members of the Quebec Federation of Labour and ordinary citizens. The creation of the *Fonds*, however, provided the means for the labour movement to participate in the economic development of Quebec with its capacity to invest directly in enterprises and sectors where job creation and job maintenance were assured. To protect its subscribers, the *Fonds* was also committed to directing a large percentage of its activities into secure investments with reasonable rates of return. The establishment of the *Fonds* in 1983 required both provincial and federal legislation; generous fiscal incentives were created to attract subscribers. While many focus on the impressive financial performance of the *Fonds de solidarité*, what is interesting from our perspective, is the capacity it provided to the labour movement to engage directly in economic development and the vital enabling role played by the state. The Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) also established a labour solidarity fund in 1995, *Fondaction*, designed to meet socio-economic objectives; it enjoys the same fiscal advantages as the *Fonds de solidarité*. Today, the government of Quebec participates in a variety of financial instruments in the growing sector of “solidarity-based finance” (finance solidaire) targeting local and regional development and the social economy. Most notably, the government of Quebec committed \$10 million in the last budget to the new FIDUCIE, a \$54 million quasi-equity or patient capital investment fund the first patient-capital investment instrument for the social economy developed by the Chantier de l’économie sociale in partnership with the Quebec Federation of Labour, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) and the federal and provincial governments. The initial capitalization of the FIDUCIE came from the federal government and its commitment to capitalize the social economy across the country. The recognition of the role of labour, as a partner in economic development from the early 1980’s, I believe, now applies to the social economy as it is increasingly recognized for its development capacity in Quebec.

But there is a longer story that needs to be told and contributes to our objective to address lessons and challenges. What researchers in Quebec refer to as the fourth generation of the social economy is associated with the emergence of social movements in the 1960's and mobilization for a more democratic and participatory democracy. The numerous civil society initiatives – citizens committees, food banks, community centers, family economy cooperative associations developed in the 1960's multiplied in the 1970's to include technical resource groups for cooperative housing, women's health centers, community media, family summer camps, workers' coops, among others. Community clinics were the model for the "Centre locaux de services communautaires" –government funded community health care and social service centers established across the province in 1974; community-based legal clinics became the basis for provincial legal aid; not for profit child care was the foundation for universal day care, the the Centre de petites enfances (CPEs) that now exist across Quebec. Community led social innovation in all these areas influenced institutional innovation in Quebec.

If we briefly trace what we have considered as four generations of the social economy in Quebec, the first generation is associated with the creation of mutual societies by workers in the middle of the nineteenth century; the second with the emergence of agricultural cooperatives and the caisses populaires movement at the turn of the century. The third generation of the social economy refers to the establishment of cooperatives in many sectors and activities including forestry, housing, education, consumer coops, to name a few, in the wake of the crisis in the 1930's. With the establishment of the Conseil supérieur de la coopération du Québec in 1940, the commitment of the Catholic labour movement to consumer and housing cooperatives and the emergence of associations engaged in popular education, culture and recreation as well as the establishment of programs to study cooperatives at Laval University and the HEC in Montreal, the cooperative movement shifts markedly from responding to crises to developing a social project, a vision for rebuilding the Quebec economy. (Lévesque,2006; Lévesque and Mendell, 2003)

I wish to return to the 1980's, because at the same time as labour, business and government were negotiating economic strategies for Quebec, community organizations shifted from social to economic intervention and began to play a critical role in economic revitalization strategies in partnership with the labour movement, the private sector and government. The 1980's mark an important turning point for our understanding of the contours of the social economy in Quebec today. The impact of economic restructuring and the recession on urban communities in Montreal led many community activists to construct strategies to rebuild their local economies. The history of PEP, the first community based economic initiative implemented in Quebec in the southwest of Montreal, is well known. PEP was the model for the community economic development corporations established by the government of Quebec in the mid 1980's, initially in Montreal and later in other regions of Quebec. The CDECs, as they are known, were pilot experiments in what we may call "a negotiated economy", demonstrations of the benefit of "multi-stakeholder collaboration" at the local level. Similar to the impact of community activism on institutional change in the 1970's, CDECs also represent the institutionalization of community based initiatives. The participation of all three levels of

government – provincial, federal and municipal- demonstrated their recognition of the value of “proximity”, their recognition that appropriate strategies for economic revitalization, poverty reduction and social cohesion could best be designed by those living and working in the community. The appropriate policies would follow. This also marks the recognition of the need for new intermediaries- – hybrid and multi-sectoral institutional environments. In today’s terminology, the CDECs are horizontal policy settings that allow for the integration of several policy domains – labour market, enterprise services and business development, social integration through economic initiatives and local revitalization and development. These CDECs were the “*pepinières*”, the seeds, for integrated policy design and implementation that acknowledged the limits of homogeneous and undifferentiated programs designed in ministerial silos and the need for multi-stakeholder dialogue. The CDECs also became important sites to resist the prevailing commitment to reduce the role of the state, by arguing for a different relationship between the state and civil society. This is a very important lesson, as the strategies to decentralize, so common in many parts of the world, must include a marked shift in the political culture that recognizes the indispensable knowledge that local actors bring to the policy table and the consequent need for flexibility in program design and delivery. In Quebec, both the pragmatic and innovative capacity of civil society to address hard issues with concrete strategies and processes of implementation has had a significant impact on the political culture and on institutional innovation. The history of the last forty years tells us that government has come to accept that a dialogue with civil society is essential to address a complex and transforming socio-economic environment.

In Quebec, the history of community activism and collaboration between major socio-economic actors has made the leveraging of collective or social action to political action somewhat easier, though many challenges remain. Despite these challenges that have increased with the current government in power, civil society is contributing to embedding the economy in a “*deliberative regulatory culture*” that has moved beyond its local and community roots as it participates in designing more complex collaboration and deliberation strategies with actors and networks across the country and with state institutions. The social economy in Quebec is the result of an active dialogue between actors and government. The links between social actors and local, regional and national levels of government is not linear; it is perhaps better described as a complex road map of political interaction, an ongoing process of institutional reconfiguration that depends on a willingness to negotiate. Social economy actors are the architects of an evolving enabling policy environment that includes new multi-stakeholder institutional settings, enabling legislation, a new vocabulary and a policy discourse to reflect this reality. The social economy in Quebec is an example of an *empowered participatory initiative*. Citizens have been directly involved in shaping its contours, in debating its structure and definitions, in developing socio-economic initiatives, in building a movement.

In revisiting the last four decades, we bear witness to the role that alliances, partnerships and deliberation have played in the evolution of the social economy in Quebec today. This is a *process of institution building* that resists institutional isomorphism by maintaining wide representation, broad based governance and dialogue. That said, the

success of the social economy over the last decade has been its capacity to speak with one voice, representing the diversity of actors involved. This was a challenge as the needs of the individual members of this network had to yield to shared objectives to promote collective enterprise, to collectively develop an alternative economic development strategy committed to democracy, equity, sustainable development and to viability, reinterpreted as socio-economic viability. The concept of sustainable development to which the social economy is committed is an enlarged one that speaks to social, economic and environmental livelihood. Indeed, the returns to the individual members representing many sectors, movements and territorial organizations, would flow from this common agenda. The strength derived from this collective engagement would increase the capacity for individual members to negotiate on their own behalf with the support of the Chantier representing the social economy as a whole.

The participation of the Quebec government in financing certain social economy initiatives, in developing programs to enable and accommodate the social economy, in supporting the infrastructure that coordinates the social economy in Quebec and in drafting legislation – the much needed legal framework for the social economy - reflects the recognition of the significant role played by civil society in Quebec and the need to re-examine how the state intervenes in social and economic development. The participants in “concertation” in Quebec in 1996 included community based actors for the first time, a clear indication of the recognition of the capacity of social movements to implement economic initiatives that meet both social and economic objectives. Today, ten years later, the Quebec model of the social economy involves an ongoing conversation between government and social economy actors, as they engage in a *policy dialogue*. In Quebec, this is not new; at the federal level, opportunities and spaces for such a dialogue are emerging and as I speak, the municipal government in Montreal is writing new policy for the social economy following similar policy dialogue with social economy actors. The *process of policy design* is transforming; neither top down nor bottom up, it is one that calls for horizontal policy within government at all levels as well as for spaces created for non-institutional actors to participate. The policy architecture that enables and accommodates the social economy in Quebec has required an increasing commitment by government to the *co-production of public policy* with practitioners– not always easy, but a process that is now embedded in the political culture of Quebec.

The social economy today in Quebec includes more than 7000 collective enterprises, both cooperatives and not-for-profit organizations and enterprises in many sectors. This distinguishes it from many countries where reference to the social economy and to the solidarity economy separates cooperatives and mutuals from associations. Quebec’s social economy also includes social movements – the labour movement, women’s movement, environmental movement as well as territorial intermediaries such as local development centers created by the Quebec government in 1997 and the network of Community Futures in Quebec. For this audience well acquainted with the Social Economy Initiative introduced by the former federal government - in Canada, we also include the voluntary sector in a broad definition of the social economy. Those faced with the challenge, and it is an important one, of developing data on the social economy, of mapping, have had to work through definitional issues and debates to agree that a broad

and inclusive definition is very important to demonstrate the diversity of the social economy and its significant contribution to the Canadian economy and to Canadian society. Equally important is the need to deconstruct or break down the data to reveal the level of activity represented by the different components that make up this large umbrella definition. However, in Quebec, the social economy refers not only to juridical status of collective enterprise, to cooperatives and non-profits, but to a vision, to an alternative economic development model that challenges the dominant paradigm through practice, through the creation of development tools – finance, training, research, labour market strategies – the building blocks for a citizen's economy. And it is not surprising that the policy environment continues to evolve to accommodate the social economy; its capacity to generate wealth is recognized. The social economy has, over the last decade, inspired policy innovation provincially, federally and most recently at the municipal level, as Montreal prepares to adopt a social economy agenda.

I have deliberately focused on the influence of the social economy on institutional change in Quebec and the need for policy innovation as a lesson or lessons and as a challenge. For the social economy to take root, it has to simultaneously promote collective enterprises and develop new instruments to permit their emergence, consolidation and growth. There are many institutional barriers such as laws and accounting norms that do not recognize the specificities of collective enterprises and the absence of appropriate evaluation and measurement tools that adequately reflect the values and the value-added of collective enterprise. Challenges include commercialization strategies to develop markets for goods and services produced in the social economy. The image of the social economy, often associated with activity on the margins of the economy or exclusively with non-market social services is also a challenge, though this is changing with increased visibility, certainly in Quebec. The important work on social accounting and social indicators is responding to the need for evaluation and appropriate accounting measures; procurement policies, integrating the social economy into the movement for socially responsible consumption, labeling, fairs are among the many strategies in place to create markets for social economy goods and services. Colleges and universities in Quebec are creating certificate and diploma programs for new occupations and professions emerging in new sectors in the social economy. Institutional innovations such as solidarity cooperatives have expanded the cooperative model to include a broad range of stakeholders. These are only a few illustrations of the innovative capacity of the social economy.

The undercapitalization of social economy enterprises and the need for ongoing finance have been identified. Quebec has been a leader in financial innovation for the social economy. The FIDUCIE marks a turning point as collective enterprise will now have access to long term investment capital for the first time. Training and labour market analysis is provided by the Sectoral Committee on the Social Economy to meet the challenge of assuring high quality and sustainable jobs in the social economy and two CURA research partnerships between practitioners and academic researchers provide a dynamic research environment for the social economy. Numerous case studies are helping to identify strengths and weaknesses of individual experiences. With the Chantier as the nucleus, these tools – finance, labour market analysis and training, research and

enterprise services –constitute a coherent and integrated structure for social innovation. This provides an important lesson; while cultural and institutional specificities vary considerably across Canada and in other parts of the world, the Quebec experience has identified the importance of coherence in building a social economy infrastructure. Indeed, as I noted earlier, in many cases, the cooperative and associational movements remain separate. In Quebec where the social economy refers to both, tensions exist. But this is a challenge, not a barrier. The social economy is inherently a “tension field” that cuts across many boundaries. Co-existence has to be negotiated; institutional innovation within movements and organizations can be a slow process. In Quebec, the labour movement has been a partner in the social economy. On the other hand, the women’s movement was opposed in the early period following the Economic Summit; today, it is a member of the Chantier. An important lesson to share with other regions here and abroad is the need to build a network to represent the social economy and act as the interlocutor with government.

I have deliberately emphasized the role of alliances, partnerships and political innovation in this presentation, which, I believe have been essential to the Quebec experience, knowing full well that this is particular to Quebec and its socio-political and cultural environment. But it is an important lesson to share because the process I have described ultimately calls upon government to consider its engagement in the social economy as an investment. This requires a new mindset and ultimately a different calculus. Underlying this is the recognition of the positive impact of the social economy on state finances, both in its contribution to economic growth and in the potential reduction in public spending from the social benefits associated with productive engagement in social economy initiatives. More than the simple shift from passive to active government policy and programs that have not produced the expected results, the social economy has demonstrated its capacity to create wealth while maintaining its commitment to equity, social justice and sustainable development. This is why government has begun to understand that it should “invest”.

By focusing on process, I have not elaborated on the strengths and weaknesses of the collective enterprises themselves that make up the social economy; this is, of course, a key concern for those actively engaged in the social economy and for those wishing to document the conditions for success; the impediments and/or barriers; why some enterprises succeed; why others do not. While numerous case studies exist, the challenge to document this systematically is being met by the current project undertaken by the Chantier to design a portal that will provide extensive information and tools for the social economy to increase the ability to identify problem areas and provide guidance and support. It will also provide a rich source of data and information that can be shared across social economy enterprises, creating an environment for problem sharing and learning. Regional nodes of the social economy recently created by the Chantier throughout Quebec, bring information, support, technical assistance and development tools closer to social economy enterprises in the regions.

The history of the social economy and the current role it occupies in Quebec society is a history of activism and mobilization. It is also a history of doggedness, of drive. There

have been many setbacks, not the least of which are elections and shifting political winds and new policy priorities. Struggles and debates within and between movements that have been resolved, but not always easily or quickly, also shape this history. In a recent meeting with my CED students, Nancy Neamtan, President of the Chantier de l'économie sociale, was asked how community activists were ready to assume the mandate given by the Bouchard government in 1996 to create 20,000 jobs in two years. She replied that they were always ready – poised – so as to be able to seize upon opportunities, that development and innovation were part of a continuous search for and implementation of new solutions to social and economic challenges. Nancy's answer speaks volumes: looking back over the last 20 years, the economic initiatives put in place by community activists in the southwest of Montreal resulted in policies, programs and laws designed to consolidate these successful initiatives. This process of institutionalization has enabled the evolution of CED and the social economy in Quebec since. Whether we refer to a range of labour market policies, the creation of CDECs, universal day care, to name a few well known examples, these policies and programs were *co-constructed* by community based architects of these initiatives and government.

In Quebec, the term *co-construction* has even greater significance as it applies to the evolution of the social economy itself and to its future place in Quebec society. Alliance building, the creation of networks, ongoing dialogue and debate among social economy actors, captures the dynamic complexity of this evolution. Leadership and political savvy are critical to this process, as we all know. But behind this leadership are horizontal and vertical linkages and networks of social movements, local development organizations, social economy sectors and, in the last six years, researchers across the province working in formalized partnership with practitioners, thanks to the two CURAs in Quebec. Sectors, movements, organizations are linked vertically throughout the province and horizontally in regional poles and through the Chantier at the national level. This large and integrated structure has not only increased the visibility of the social economy and its legitimacy as a site for policy, most significantly, it has created numerous participatory “*hybrid spaces*” throughout the province. This did not happen overnight; it is the result of years of building relationships, of breaking down traditional barriers between movements and organizations accustomed to working in “silos”.

Relationships between researchers and practitioners had to be “*constructed*” as well. While CURA partnerships are now part of the social economy architecture in Quebec, developing these partnerships involved dialogue and time. Common objectives were not enough to erase embedded cultural differences between these two communities. This, despite longstanding relationships of trust between many of the participants. The institutionalized partnership of the CURA was new. Today, several years later, we can say that this partnership has increased the capacity for strategic interventions in the many areas of the social economy, from micro sectoral issues to cross-cutting policy discussions. The research clusters of the social economy provide important documentation for analysis of the social economy, both conceptual and empirical. Researchers and practitioners collaborate on timely, urgent questions as well as on the development of tools. CURA also provides important opportunities for debate and reflection. The dialogue this has generated is invaluable in developing a corpus of

knowledge on the social economy. The broad circulation of material and the organization of numerous public events have been critical to generating a dynamic policy dialogue within Quebec and across the country.

The relationships between researchers and practitioners is solid today; together they have created an innovative environment for collective learning that is both inter-disciplinary and participatory. Action research is not new. However, constructing an institutional environment that demonstrates the value of integrated research and interactive learning is challenging conventional approaches to education, research and pedagogy. The CURAs transcend institutional boundaries in new and innovative ways. An increasing number of students are involved either indirectly through a growing number of university courses and programs on CED and the social economy or directly as interns or research assistants in a variety of projects. Their engagement takes them out of the library and into the offices and meeting rooms of actors. They work closely with their academic supervisors designing a rigorous methodology. They have extraordinary access to people and to information. Increasing feedback from students is very positive; many wish to work in the field when they complete their studies. These students are not only expressing a professional choice. In Quebec, a growing number of young people have embraced the social economy as an alternative democratically based economic development model, committed to social justice and equity. The underlying principles of the social economy speak to young people alienated by a predominantly market driven ideology.

In many ways, the research alliance in Quebec that is under construction in regions across Canada, is an additional component in what we may call the *strategic mobilization* that has characterized the evolution of the social economy in Quebec. This is truly the *leitmotif* of our story. The development of concrete tools and instruments – finance, training, enterprise development, research - runs parallel to the ongoing commitment to mobilization and alliance building locally, regionally and nationally. The presence of the social economy in the policy arena is the outcome of this dynamic process, as is the successful mobilization of financial and political resources. But there were no short cuts; this took time. Indeed, the federal social economy initiative created opportunities across the country, in the many regions that do not share the history of Quebec's social economy. Still, this program mobilized the country and while the social economy initiative has fallen victim to Harper's hatchet, the mobilization that this has inspired in a short period of time, will survive. The landscape of this country makes it impossible to predict how the social economy will evolve in different regions. And a made-in-Quebec recipe won't work. The ingredients are simply not the same. What is useful to remember, however, is that in Quebec, the current policy architecture is the result of a long deliberative process, of negotiation, of dialogue, of an actively engaged citizens movement.

The social economy can best be described as permeable layers of people, institutions, tools and instruments, of places separated by distance and by culture. In many ways, the CURAs in Quebec allow us to move through those layers and work simultaneously in many key areas, generating information and knowledge that is shared broadly. The CURAs provide a location, both *spatial* and *dialogic* to coordinate and disseminate this

information and knowledge among their members and to the larger public. The participation of over 700 delegates representing the many sectors, movements and organizations in the social economy at the Social Economy Summit in November demonstrates the significant role of the social economy in Quebec society today. Delegates will be joined by members of government and representatives from 16 countries wishing to participate. The themes addressed - employment, investment, local development, fair trade and globalization – speak to critical societal concerns and challenges. This event will represent a critical moment in demonstrating the viability of developing a citizens economy, of developing an alternative democratic model of socio-economic development. The blueprint for this already exists in practice, in lived realities. There are enormous challenges ahead, as there were 10 years ago when the Chantier de l'économie sociale was born. There has often be talk of finding a new name. When does a “chantier” cease being a “construction site”? Building democratic institutions is not a finite process. And so the “Chantier” is a most appropriate name.

Thank you.